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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine: (1) whether compensatory education can influence the "self-Esteem" of minority or disadvantaged students; (2) if this "self-Esteem" improves with improved school achievement due to compensatory interventions; and, (3) whether there are noticeable differences in the self-esteem of majority and minority pupils. A self-esteem inventory was used. It was found that compensatory education did not produce many significant changes in the students' self-esteem. (DM)

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CAN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION IMPROVE THE SELF-IMAGE OF SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CHILDREN?

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CAN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION IMPROVE THE SELF-IMAGE OF CULTURALLY AND SOCIALLY DIFFERENT CHILDREN?

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The majority of present Title I Compensatory Education programs in this country state as one of their goals: "to raise the self-image of disadvantaged pupils". Descriptions of practices, however, concern themselves almost totally with instructional interventions which are aimed at "raising the achievement-levels of these children." It is the general belief of these compensatory educators that a rise in self-esteem will be a by-product. This is based on the assumption that if a student's school-achievement improves, so will his feeling about himself.

There appears some doubt as to whether this is possible, or even realistic in line with present compensatory emphases. There is also a question as to whether this is necessary or even advantageous. In line with this, one need to raise the issue of the nature of self-esteem as defined by the various authors of self-instruments, and their methodology in assessing it by which they then tag a pupil with "high" or "low" self-esteem.

Another question is that of "how good is good enough self-esteem" for culturally or socially different youngsters?

Still another item to consider: "for what product is this "self-esteem a requisite? " Is it necessary to achieve it in order to like the school, the teachers, learning to read,

aspring to middle-class values, and making the culturally-different child more like the school in its present practices?

Much is written by self-authors which is conflicting, and therefore it is difficult to compare studies. (Zirkel and Moses,1971) At best one can make only generalizations on similar populations who have received similar treatments. While it is generally accepted that children with good feelings about themselves will achieve more effectively in school, the reverse is not necessarily true. And while good achievers frequently have adequate self-conceptions, non-achievers do not necessarily suffer with poor self-images. It must be mentioned here also, that while the disadvantaged or different are frequently stereotyped as possessing "negative self-images", a number of studies are emerging to prove the opposite.(Havighurst,1970; Soares and Soares, 1969; DeBlassie and Healy, 1970; Hepner, 1971 ; Trowbridge, 1972)

PURPOSE

The present study was designed to determine: (1) whether compensatory education, as it is practiced, can influence the "self-esteem" of minority or disadvantaged students, (2) if this "self-esteem" improves with improved school-achievement due to compensatory interventions, and (3) whether there are noticeable differences in the self-esteem of majority and minority-pupils.

The criterion used here for determining self-concept was Stanley Coopersmith's SELF ESTEEM INVENTORY (CSEI), (1965). It was chosen primarily because of its wide use, because other researchers have found it effective, and have made

various generalizations based on their results.

The CSEI is a self-inventory consisting of 58 items designed for children between 9 and 14 years. It asks if a certain attitude is "like me", or "unlike me", as the child perceives himself. The maximum possible score is 100. The average score by Coopersmith reportedly is 71 (70 for males and 72 for females).

According to Coopersmith, low self-esteem is marked by a lack of trust in oneself, marked self-consciousness, and preoccupation with inner problems.

Items are subdivided into four subscales: General Self; Social self-peers; Home-parents; School-academic. In addition, there is a "lie-scale" which is indicative of what he calls "defensiveness".

PROCEDURE

313 students (152 girls and 161 boys) in grades four, five, and sex from three Title I "target-schools" were sampled. All had similar I.Q!s, SES, ages, and were project-participants who received special instructional interventions in reading, language, arithmetic, and counselling.

While most self-studies assess this attitude about the self only once and then to decide if the subject is adequate or inadequate in this area, the purpose of this investigation was to see if the self-attitude is improved after educational treatment. Therefore, the CSEI was administered to all pupils before and after a year's program. Pre and Post-achievement-test scores were also available for the same students for the same period.

The tests were administered by the specialist-teachers. They were scored by the data-processing unit, and analyzed by means of extensive Chi-Square analyses of all variables involved: the four sub-scales ,lie-scale, ethnic group, school, grade, sex, and pre and post-scores. In addition, cross-tabulations were run controlling for one or more of the variables, and recoding some of the factors by analyzing students who scored "low", "middle" , or "high" in these.

RESULTS

Total and subtotal scores were computed for each student before and after the program. Means of total scores for pre and post-testing of the three target-schools (Abbott, Lincoln, Lindbergh) are given in Table 1.

(Table 1 here)

They indicate: (a) no differences between the schools, (b) no differences before and after "treatment" in the schools, and (c) a lower than average self-esteem-score, both before and after "treatment", than that reported and defined by Coopersmith.

Though each of the three schools qualified for "economically disadvantaged target-schools", there were some variables which were previously believed to make a "difference" between the schools; such as: minority-population, school achievement (according to standardized test-scores), and transciency-rate of families. However, nonetheless, none of these factors appeared to discriminate between the school according to the results.

TABLE 1

MEANS OF STUDENTS SCORES ON COOPERSMITH SELF ESTEEM INVENTORY (CSEI)

School	Mean Pretest	Mean Post-test
ABBOTT	63.8	64.5
LINCOLN	69.6	63.1
LINDBERGH	64.3	64.1
AVERAGE	65.9	63.9

TABLE 2

MEANS OF SUBSCALE SCORES OF THE COOPERSMITH SELF ESTEEM INVENTORY and COMPARISONS with RESULTS REPORTED RECENTLY BY TROWBRIDGE

SCALE	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Trowbridge Means Low SES	Middle SES
GENERAL SELF	32.8	33.4	36.3	33.5
SOCIAL SELF-PEERS	10.2	10.4	14.8	11.6
SCHOOL-ACADEMIC	10.8	11.8	13.1	10.2
HOME-PARENTS	9.4	9.0	9.9	13.1

Subscale mean scores are reported in Table 2 for pre and post-testing.

(Table 2 here)

Because Trowbridge (1972) recently used the same instrument, it seemed of interest to compare her means with these. While the means in the present study reflected scores of largely "lower-class" students, they resembled her middle-class results to some degree. The exception was in the area of School-Academic, the Lynwood students outscored the Trowbridge students. On the other hand, on the Home-parent subscale, the present students scored substantially lower - that is, according to their self-perceptions.

Table 3 gives a picture of all the comparisons and cross-tabulations run, and indicates the little significant difference that was found. One school, Lindbergh had significantly -improved post-test scores on the students' General-Self scale - and this regardless of ethnic groups. Lincoln school had a slightly higher score on the same scale on the post-test, but not at a significant level.

Lincoln-school which is "majority-Latin" nevertheless appears to make the Anglos' self-image stronger. On the pre-testing in the areas of Social-Peers, School-Academic, and General-Self, the higher scores all favored the Anglos. (.05, .05 plus, and .10 respectively) However, if it is any consolation, on the post-test of the same scales, any of the above significances disappeared.

TABLE 3 (continued)

	Level of Significance
Pre-Post Ethnic and General Self recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Ethnic and Social-Peers recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Ethnic and School-Academic recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Ethnic and Home-Parents recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Ethnic and Lie Scale recoded	larger than .05
Pre-Post Sex and General Self recoded	.001 girls lower post
Pre-Post Sex and Social-Peers recoded	.001 girls lower post
Pre-Post Sex and School-Academic recoded	.001 girls lower post
Pre-Post Sex and Home-Parents recoded	.001 girls lower post
Pre-Post Sex and Lie Scale recoded	.001 girls lower post
Pre-Post Grade and General Self recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Grade and Social-Peers recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Grade and School-Academic recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Grade and Home-Parents recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Grade and Lie Scale recoded	n.s.
General Self and Schools and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
General Self and Ethnics and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
General Self and Sex and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
General Self and Grade and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Social-Peers and Schools and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Social-Peers and Ethnics and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Social-Peers and Sex and Pre-Post controlled	.05 pretest
Social-Peers and Grade and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
School-Academic and Schools and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
School-Academic and Ethnics and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
School-Academic and Sex and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
School-Academic and Grade and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Home-Parent and Schools and Pre-Post controlled	.20 post-test
Home-Parent and Ethnics and Pre-Post controlled	.20 pretest
Home-Parent and Sex and Pre-Post controlled	.05 post-test
Home-Parent and Grade and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Lie-Scale and Schools and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Lie-Scale and Ethnics and Pre-Post controlled	.10 pretest--.05 post-test
Lie-Scale and Sex and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.
Lie-Scale and Grade and Pre-Post controlled	n.s.

TABLE 3

CROSS-TABULATIONS OF SUBSCALES AND VARIABLES AND LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE NOTED

Variables	Level of Significance
Pre-Post Total CSEI	n.s.
Pre-Post General Self	n.s.
Pre-Post Social Peers	n.s.
Pre-Post School- Academic	n.s.
Pre-Post Home-Parents	n.s.
Pre-Post Lie Scale	n.s.
Pre-Post General Self and Schools controlled	-.05 Lindbergh post
Pre-Post Social-Peers and Schools controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post School-Academic and Schools controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Home-Parents and Schools controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Lie-Scale and Schools controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post General Self and Ethnics controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Social-Peers and Ethnics controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post School-Academic and Ethnics controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Home-Parents and Ethnics controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Lie Scale and Ethnics controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post General Self and Sex controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Social-Peers and Sex controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post School-Academic and Sex controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Home-Parents and Sex controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Lie Scale and Sex controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post General Self and Grade controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Social-Peers and Grade controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post School-Academic and Grade controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Home-Parents and Grade controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Lie Scale and Grade controlled	n.s.
Pre-Post Schools and General Self recoded (low-middle-high scores)	n.s.
Pre-Post Schools and Social-Peers recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Schools and School-Academic recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Schools and Home-Parents recoded	n.s.
Pre-Post Schools and Lie Scale recoded	n.s.

Of major interest would be the results on Tables 4 and 5.

(Tables 4 and 5 here)

These results concerned the "lying" or "defensiveness" of the pupils in relation to ethnic group and possible shifts from pre to post-testing. The results show that the Latin group is least defensive on both pre-and post-testing, and also shows no shifting in attitude. 33% of the entire sample is found in the lowest-defensive category. This is contrary to others' findings, which are, however, based on different instruments (DeBlassie & Healy, 1970). Anglos in the middle and high groups were the most defensive, and Blacks were similar to the Latins on pre-tesing, BUT shifted to being "more defensive" on post-testing. The shift was from the low group on the pre-test to the middle group on the post-test.

Tables 6, 7, and 8 indicate the same comparisons, but this time with General-Self factor recoded for low, middle-high scores.

(Tables 6,7,8 here)

Of those with low General-Self, Blacks were least defensive, and Anglos again most. Of those with medium General-Self, Anglos were highest, while Blacks and Latins were similar, but with Latins again being the lowest defensive group. Of those pupils with relatively high General-Self, Latins consistently were the least defensive, but this time the Black group was the most defensive. This finding is somewhat strange when one agrees with Coopersmith's definition of "self-esteem", strange in that one would not "expect" this.

TABLE 4

CROSS- TABULATION OF LIE SCALE RECODED (LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH) AND ETHNIC WITH PREPOST CONTROLLED

PRETEST

		ETHNIC		
		ANGLO %	LATIN %	BLACK %
LIE-SCALE	low	22.7	36.1	38.5
	middle	50.9	48.1	46.2
	high	26.4	15.7	15.4

Chi-Square: 6.76892 with 4 degrees of freedom
Level of Significance: .10

TABLE 5

CROSS-TABULATION OF LIE SCALE RECODED (LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH) AND ETHNIC WITH PREPOST CONTROLLED

POST-TEST

		ETHNIC		
		ANGLO %	LATIN %	BLACK %
LIE SCALE	low	27.7	33.6	17.2
	middle	44.5	48.7	69.0
	high	27.7	17.6	13.8

Chi-Square: 9.47481 with 4 degrees of freedom
Level of Significance: .05

TABLE 6

CROSS-TABULATION OF LIE SCALE RECODED (LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH) AND ETHNIC WITH GENERAL SELF CONTROLLED (FOR LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH)

LOW GENERAL SELF GROUP

		ETHNIC		
		ANGLO %	LATIN %	BLACK %
LIE-SCALE	low	16.3	27.0	27.3
	middle	59.8	49.4	72.7
	high	23.9	23.6	0.0

Chi-Square: 9.81887 with 4 degrees of freedom
Level of Significance: better than .05

TABLE 7

CROSS-TABULATION OF LIE SCALE RECODED (LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH) AND ETHNIC WITH GENERAL SELF CONTROLLED (FOR LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH)

MIDDLE GENERAL SELF GROUP

		ETHNIC		
		ANGLO %	LATIN %	BLACK %
LIE-SCALE	low	23.9	35.3	31.6
	middle	44.6	52.9	52.6
	high	31.5	11.8	15.8

Chi-Square: 9.66436 with 4 degrees of freedom
Level of Significance: better than .05

TABLE 8

CROSS-TABULATION OF LIE SCALE RECODED (LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH) AND ETHNIC WITH GENERAL SELF CONTROLLED (FOR LOW-MIDDLE-HIGH)

HIGH GENERAL SELF GROUP

		ETHNIC		
		ANGLO %	LATIN %	BLACK %
LIE-SCALE	low	38.3	48.9	21.4
	middle	35.8	40.0	42.9
	high	25.9	11.1	35.7

Chi-Square: 6.55518 with 4 degrees of freedom
Level of Significance: .10

but then, this "expectation" or set is one pitfall that researchers, test-makers, and Anglo educators are often inclined to have. (Hepner etal, 1972). There is no information available as to ethnic groups used in Coopersmith's norms, but one can assume they were largely Anglo students. Trowbridge refers to "race" factors, but also does not elucidate, though she found a difference there. One must ask oneself why the cultural definitions are so overlooked? Or the cultural values and priorities?

The other dramatic finding that can be seen on Table 3, is the differences between the sexes on both pre and post-testing, which in every category favored the girls as being "less defensive" on all comparisons at a .001 level of significance. Do girls lie less, do they not need to "save face" as much, can they look at themselves more honestly ? We are not ready to make interpretations on this issue.

This author has data on the same instrument, with pre and post-testing of another sample, though similar, and concerning the same school-populations of a previous year (Hepner, 1971b) and discovered a negative shift (toward lowered self-esteem) of the pupils over the "treatment-period", as follows:

General Self:	.001
Social-Peers:	.01
School-Academic:	.01
General Self-Latin group:	.001

On the Lie-Scale (defensiveness) however, the students were less defensive at the end of the year. (.05).

SUMMARY

The purposes of this investigation were to see if compensatory education-treatment can influence the self-esteem of minority or disadvantaged youngsters, so that after-treatment scores would improve; and further, to note if there are differences in either "before" or "after" self-esteem scores among majority and minority students.

The results of this study indicated the following:

a. Compensatory education in this instance did not produce many significant changes in the student-participants as concerning their self-esteem , as defined by Coopersmith.

b. Neither target-schools nor grade-levels made any significant difference in the comparisons.

c. Some ethnic differences were noted, but they were concerned largely with "defensiveness" of some groups over others - which should bear further investigation and interpretation.

d. Some ethnic differences were noted before treatment, as might be expected, which disappeared after treatment.

e. By and large, Latins were the least defensive in all comparisons, and Anglos the most defensive.

f. Most significant were sex-differences where girls were far less defensive than boys in any categories in any period of testing.

g. Since so much is published and discussed about "ethnic" mixes and percentages, it was intersting to note that even where the Latins were in the majority (which is a rather

"new" majority, however, Anglos felt better about themselves as measured by the present instrument.

In this context it might be noted that these same compensatory education participants gained in achievement in reading and arithmetic over the "treatment period" rather dramatically: one-and-a-half to two or more months gain for each month in the program, while regular classrooms report an average of seven to eight months gain over the same period of time. It should not be assumed, however, that even with these profitable gains the pupils have become "equal" to those not disadvantaged educationally.

DISCUSSION

It appears from the above that compensatory education as it is now practiced,does not, or cannot alter the self-esteem of the disadvantaged or culturally-different pupil. One has to take into account, however, the definition of self-esteem used, and the type of values and priorities asked for in the instrument, which may or may not fit with the values and priorities the students set for themselves.

How important is it, really, that these students acquire the school's definition of self-worth, which is what Coopersmith reflects? And how would this relate to the pupils' achievements? Unfortunately, Trowbridge (1972) did not relate her results with school-achievement. It would be interesting to see if her higher self-concept pupils in the lower SES group had higher or lower school-achievement. She generalizes that these children were better-adjusted socially and more comfortable with their

peers, which is a finding Hepner (1971) found using a different self-instrument. She also felt that her data showed that the lower SES group perceived school-life in a more positive way than the middle-class children. Hepner (1971) generalized similarly, stating that these lower-class minority-children did not feel as driven,or stressful, or guilty about achievement or non-achievement, and therefore experienced less conflict. Could one hypothesize that as soon as one drives them toward more competitive achievement, their self-esteem scores decrease? In the present investigation, the post-scores were at times less desirable, in that some of the groups (anglos and boys) became "bigger liers" or more defensive after exposure or educational treatment.

In terms of this study, the expected higher self-esteem as a result of compensatory education, did not materialize. There was little impact in this area because of the program, even though the program was academically successful. This means that how a person feels about himself in relation to others is a different, or deeper, or more involved matter that cannot be altered through improved skills. It must be added also, that no efforts or processes are ever described in compensatory education projects that give us insight as to how this self-esteem is going to be raised. No activities or processes or involvements are outlined whereby childrens' value-preferences or role-choices are dealt with directly, or even where relations with peers or pupil-teacher interactions are analyzed in terms of their possible discrepancies or deterrants to profit from the school-culture and process.

Therefore, we would maintain that it may be unrealistic to expect a change in Self-Esteem in this program as it is stated and measured. Compensatory education aims are limited generally to bringing the students up to a level where they can be reached by "existing educational practices". This, apparantly, can be done without such idealistic goals as "raising their feeling of self-worth".

The final question is: should we really concern ourselves with the life-style and values and preoccupations of culturally-different children, perhaps a different approach is needed: to build on the strengths of the children, and not on their weaknesses - even if these values are not the same as those of the school's and the teacher's. We are quite obviously not able to make these children over in our image, though we try very hard. Gordon and Wilkerson (1966) in their critique of compensatory education, raised the issue that these children are not middle=class children, and many of them never will be. Therefore, it is not at all clear that the concept of compensatory education is the one which will most appropriately meet the problems of the disadvantaged.

There seem to be two avenues which have been overlooked as educators make rather minimal efforts to follow "federal guidelines" that will earn them the federal dollar. One is, as has been suggested, that perhaps differential educational skills and choices need to be experimented with in compensatory education for culturally and socially different students; not more of the same of what we already have.

The second is that we have never attempted to truly understand the nature of the poor school-adjustment of these different children. It is not enough that we look at their (often questionable) achievement-test scores. No objective studies have analyzed the school's effectiveness as perceived by the student and/or parent. No objective study appears available which tells us what kind of educational experience might be most appropriate to what these children are and to what our society is becoming.

Once again, the crucial question is the matter of whom we are trying to change. Thus far our efforts have been to manipulate the family and to change the child. Perhaps compensatory education has been a financial failure because the school has not yet been willing to give up its basic structure and fit the needs of today's society and its children.

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